

The Monitor

January 2016 – July 2016

Dear Readers,

This edition of *The Monitor* covers our office's activities from January through July 2016. We publish the Monitor to keep you informed about our work in the office of the [Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism](#) (SEAS).

We traveled to the Czech Republic in January; Germany and the United Kingdom in March; Morocco and Tunisia in May; France, Turkey, Austria, and Germany in June; and Colombia, Argentina, and Mexico in July. These overseas trips included hosting seminars, attending conferences, and meeting with NGOs, government officials, Jewish communities, and religious leaders. Additionally, our office met with civil society partners in the U.S. to reinforce USG efforts on combating global anti-Semitism.

For more regular updates, you can follow me on Twitter ([@SEASForman](#)) where I comment on the latest developments, issues, and events surrounding anti-Semitism and the protection of Jewish communities around the world.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our work.

All the best,

Ira Forman



Index

International Travel **3**

January 2016

[Czech Republic](#)

March 2016

[Germany](#)

[United Kingdom](#)

May 2016

[Morocco](#)

[Tunisia](#)

June 2016

[France](#)

[Turkey](#)

[Austria](#)

[Germany](#)

July 2016

[Colombia](#)

[Argentina](#)

[Mexico](#)

Domestic Events **15**

Online Outreach **16**

International Travel

January 2016

Prague, Czech Republic



SEAS Forman thanks Ms. Von Schnurbein for organizing the meeting of Special Envoys in Prague.



Left to Right: Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues Nick Dean, European Commission Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism Katharina von Schnurbein, and SEAS Forman.

In January, we were invited to Prague (along with Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues Nick Dean) to meet the new European Commission Coordinator on Combating Anti-Semitism, Katharina von Schnurbein. Ms. Von Schnurbein aimed to gather more information about Jewish communities and NGOs throughout the EU. She reaffirmed the political will to tackle anti-Semitism in EU member states.

At this meeting, which was attended by other government leaders and parliamentarians working on anti-Semitism and/or Holocaust issues, we also heard from the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lubomír Zaorálek, and the Minister for Human Rights, Mr. Jiří Dienstbier.

After the meeting, our office toured Prague's historical Jewish district, including the 15th-century Jewish cemetery, the Jewish museum, and the Pinkas synagogue. Petr Papousek, Head of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, explained that even though there are officially 2,800 Jewish community members in the Czech Republic, the number of Jews is probably closer to 10,000. We learned that since the Holocaust the number of Jewish communities has dropped significantly from 150 to 10. In 2015 there had been a three-fold

increase (from 15 to 45) in the number of anti-Semitic incidents. These incidents were all internet related.

To learn more about how we can strengthen our partnerships with civil society, our office met with the Director of the European Shoah Legacy Institute (ESLI), and with the director of InJustitia—a Czech NGO founded in 2009 to protect communities from violent racism and neo-Nazism and to provide legal assistance to victims.

March 2016

Berlin, Germany



SEAS Forman and Doris Barnett, Head of the German delegation to the OSCE and Treasurer of the OSCE PA, Berlin.



The plenary session: “Government and Official Responses to Antisemitism” at the ICCA in Berlin featuring SEAS Forman.

In March, we traveled to Berlin to participate in the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism (ICCA). Chancellor Angela Merkel addressed an audience of over one hundred government and civil society leaders working to combat anti-Semitism in Europe. I participated in the “Government and Official Responses to Antisemitism” panel and reminded the audience that as government leaders and parliamentarians we need to encourage civil society to speak out, build coalitions and bridges with diverse communities, and educate our constituents about citizenship and democratic values.

During our time in Berlin I had the opportunity to meet with several important religious and civil society leaders. Rabbi Josh Spinner, Executive Vice President & CEO of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, reported that there are 110,000 Jewish community members in Germany—90% of whom are originally from countries of the former Soviet Union. In addition, there are at least 20,000 Israeli Jews residing in Berlin alone. Benjamin Steinitz, the founder of RIAS

(Gründung der Recherche- und Informationsstelle Antisemitismus), explained how RIAS works with the police to conduct investigations and classify crimes as “anti-Semitic.” We also met with Anetta Kahane, the Director of the Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, a leading anti-racism NGO, which organizes an annual “Action Week against Antisemitism” in Germany each November. Deidre Berger, the Director of the *AJC's* Lawrence and Lee *Ramer* Institute for German-Jewish Relations, told us about the HEROES program. An extracurricular youth club, HEROES teaches Muslim kids about Islam and demonstrates how to “be a hero” in their communities, in hopes that these kids will be less susceptible to Salafist ideology. I concluded the trip with an [interview](#) with Toby Axelrod for the JTA and Jewish Chronicle on the current state of anti-Semitism.

London, United Kingdom



David Feldman, Director of the Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism, hosts SEAS Forman in his office in London.



SEAS Forman in front of Westminster on the way to meet Sir Eric Pickles.

After Berlin, we traveled to London to meet with leaders of the Community Security Trust (CST). The CST reports that the Jewish community in the UK was much more willing to report on anti-Semitic incidents since the February 2015 attacks in Paris. During this meeting the CST also discussed developing best practices, building capacity, and improving information-sharing on the security of Jewish communities in Europe.

While in London, we also met with Professor David Hirsh of Goldsmiths College and Professor David Feldman of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at the University of London. In these meetings, we discussed the historical context of anti-Semitism in the UK, from its origins to its current forms on the Left and on college campuses, and the working definition of anti-Semitism.

We also learned about two initiatives that have been developed specifically to tackle anti-Semitism in the press and social media. Gideon Falter, the Chairman of Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), oversees the “#Everydayantisemitism” [program](#), which monitors international press. The Media Diversity Institute has launched its “Get the Trolls Out! Project,” which monitors social and news media looking for anti-Semitism and responds with satire, cartoons, and videos depending on the context, and strives to better equip civil society to communicate with the media. Lastly, we met with the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BOD). Founded in 1760, the BOD is the oldest Jewish organization in Britain. According to the BOD, there is a greater sense of being Jewish in British society today, as more and more Jewish children are enrolled in Jewish day schools and intermarriage rates have slowed down.

May 2016

Rabat and Casablanca, Morocco



Left to Right: U.S. Ambassador to Morocco Dwight L. Bush, SEAS Forman, and Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Ahmed Tawfiq.



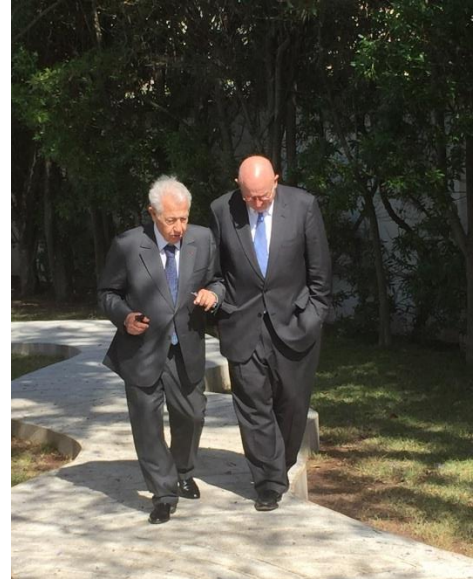
Members of the Mimouna Association welcome SEAS Forman during a dialogue at U.S Embassy Rabat.

From May 17-23, we travelled to Morocco to meet with Jewish leaders and government officials to discuss the current state of Jewish community—the largest surviving Jewish community in the Arab world—and the unique challenges that it faces.

In Rabat, we met with Aicha Haddou, Director of the Rabita Interfaith Studies Center and Perla Cohen, a consultant. The Center’s team includes Muslim, Jewish and Christian members, and is concerned with anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe. They have been invited by the European Commission to connect Morocco to Europe to work on the issue. Among other issues, we discussed a project for Jewish and Muslim scholars to study religious texts together and the importance of Morocco’s constitution (adopted in 2011) stressing the Jewish contributions to the country’s culture. We ate traditional Moroccan food with David Toledano and members of Rabat’s Jewish community and toured the Jewish synagogues in Rabat and Sale. We had a rich dialogue with members of the Mimouna Association, a student club founded at Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane in 2007, to promote the recognition and celebration of Morocco’s unique

Jewish culture. The Association has organized numerous cultural and academic events in hopes of strengthening Jewish/Muslim relations throughout the Moroccan diaspora. I also had a productive conversation with Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Ahmed Tawfiq. We attended the launch event for Moroccan Ambassador-at-Large Serge Berdugo's book "Houses of Life" (about the project to rehabilitate Jewish cemeteries in Morocco) at the National Library of Rabat, and had the opportunity to speak with him about the Jewish community.

In Casablanca, I toured the Jewish Museum with its President Jacques Toledano and Curator Zhor Rehilil, and visited the "Narcisse Leven" primary school, which enrolls Jewish and Muslim students, with Dorith Benmoha of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. I also attended a Roundtable with UCLA Professor Aomar Boum on "Jewish Muslim Dialogue in Morocco: An Anthropological Perspective" at the SOC Jewish Club. In Marrakesh, I took a tour of the Lazama Synagogue and the Mellah—the old Jewish Quarter—and met with a number of community members and Jewish pilgrims at Shabbat services.



Jacques Toledano, the President of the Jewish Museum, leads SEAS Forman on a tour.

See also our dipnote on the trip: "Morocco: Arab or Berber by Identity; Jewish by Culture": <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2016/06/16/morocco-arab-or-berber-identity-jewish-culture>

Djerba, Tunisia



Minister of Tourism Salma Elloumi Rekik discusses the security of Jewish communities in Djerba with SEAS Forman.



SEAS Forman participates in the Lag B'Omer pilgrimage in Djerba and meets with President of El Ghriba Perez Trabelsi.

From Morocco, we traveled to Djerba, Tunisia, to once again participate in the official Lag B'Omer events. I joined Knox Thames, Special Advisor on Religious Minorities in the Middle East and South/Central Asia, in the festivities and we both journeyed to the famous Ghriba Synagogue on the annual [pilgrimage](#). We visited the Jewish Quarter, a Jewish school, the Rabbi Shalom Synagogue, and dined with the Grand Rabbi and his Jewish committee. The Djerba community is distinguished from many other small diaspora communities by both its ancient history, its commitment to maintain its traditions (such as the pilgrimage), and its high percentage of youth. It is our hope that this unique community will continue to be a symbol of diversity and tolerance within a robust Tunisian democracy.

June 2016

Paris, France



Human Rights First and Coexister host a roundtable for SEAS Forman and other French civil society organizations.

In June 2016 we traveled to Paris for a series of meetings with representatives from the government, Jewish community organizations and civil society. Many with whom we consulted felt that the situation for France's Jews had improved in recent months. The government was praised for the police and other security measures it had offered synagogues and Jewish day schools. Given the recent terror attacks in France, some discussants expressed concern about the availability of future resources for Jewish community institutions. [Note: our visit took place just prior to the attacks in Nice.] Toward the end of our visit we held a roundtable with Human Rights First and Coexister, a French umbrella organization composed of thirty-six civil society groups that focus on interreligious projects and combatting anti-Semitism, racism, and other forms of intolerance.

Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey



SEAS Forman visits the Samanpazari synagogue alongside Ankara's Jewish community President and several of its board members.



Chief Rabbi Haleva welcomes SEAS Forman to the Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul.

Following the trip to Paris, we spent several days in Turkey. In Ankara, we met with government officials and visited the community's active synagogue alongside the community's President and several of its board members. In Edirne, we toured the synagogue, which is the second largest in Europe and recently refurbished by the government. During my meeting with Edirne's governor and mayor, both expressed interest in developing "faith tourism" in Edirne. [Note: we also visited Edirne's magnificent mosque.] While visiting a day school, a synagogue and a retirement home, I reached out to other members of the community as well. The U.S. Consulate in Istanbul held a reception which was also attended by SEAS and members of the local Jewish community. In Istanbul, we also met with researchers from a human rights organization that tracks anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance in the media and on a variety of social media platforms. At the conclusion of the visit, we had a very engaging meeting with the Chief Rabbi Haleva of Istanbul's Jewish community.

Vienna, Austria



SEAS Forman meets with EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Director, Michael O'Flaherty in Vienna.



German Ambassador to the OSCE Eberhard Pohl hosts SEAS Forman in his office in Vienna.

In June we traveled to Vienna to meet with Jewish community leadership, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), and ambassadors to the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Before World War II, there were more than 200,000 Jews in Austria. Today there are only 12-15,000 Jews—8,000 of whom are members of the IKG (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien). Since the 1970s, the Jewish community of Vienna has developed a robust communal infrastructure which ensures the continuity of their way of life. According to the Jewish community President Oskar Deutsch, Vienna possesses five Jewish schools (K-high school), twenty synagogues, fifty kosher shops, including butchers, bakeries, and restaurants, and multiple community centers.

We met with FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty to discuss the importance of the working definition of anti-Semitism and to learn more about FRA's plans for a follow-up survey on anti-Semitism in the EU. Dr. O'Flaherty assured us that combatting anti-Semitism will remain a top priority for FRA. We examined the issue of Jewish community security in Western Europe with the Vice President of the European Jewish Congress (EJC) and World Jewish Congress (WJC). Finally, we met with the German Ambassador to the OSCE, which provided us the opportunity to thank the German government for placing combating anti-Semitism among its top priorities for its OSCE Chairmanship.

Berlin, Germany



SEAS Forman speaks at a breakfast roundtable at the AJC Berlin Ramer Institute in Berlin.



Kreuzburg Initiative against Anti-Semitism (KIgA) members explain their work to SEAS Forman.

On June 20, we attended the “OSCE German Chairmanship's Meeting with National POCs (points of contact)” on Combating Anti-Semitism in Berlin to discuss the working definition of anti-Semitism and exchange best practices to combat anti-Semitism. The next day we were joined by representatives from the OSCE, and from the German and Israeli governments for a roundtable entitled “Are We Doing Enough to Combat Anti-Semitism? Perspectives from Four Special Representatives on Fighting Anti-Semitism” at the AJC’s Lawrence and Lee Ramer Institute for German-Jewish Relations.

In Berlin, we also met with representatives from KIgA (Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism) who presented the important work it is doing to win Muslim community members as partners in combating anti-Semitism. With the Executive Secretary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), Kathrin Meyer, we discussed the success of the [working definition](#) of anti-Semitism that was recently passed by consensus by IHRA member states. The co-Director of the International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism (IIBSA), Kim Robin Stoller, delved into the organization’s ongoing projects in Spain, Morocco, and Germany.

Finally, we had the opportunity to meet with the deputy director of the Jewish Museum Berlin, Cilly Kugelman. Receiving between 600,000-700,000 visitors a year, this federal museum portrays the history of Jews in Germany from late antiquity to modern times. Because the first recording of Jews in the German region is from the 4th century CE, the museum’s intention is to showcase Jewish history in Germany as a “history of presence” rather than a “history of migration.”

July 2016

Bogotá, Colombia



SEAS Forman meets President George Levy [Right] and Vice-President Marcos Peckel [Left] of the Confederation of Jewish Communities of Colombia (CCJC).

From July 13-22, we traveled throughout Latin America, visiting Bogotá, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City, to meet with Jewish communities. We also focused on building relations with the Catholic Church, which has been a strong advocate against anti-Semitism in recent decades. In Bogotá, we met with Colombia's Jewish leadership, who educated us about the community there and shared some of their concerns. Like many Jewish communities in Latin America, the community traces its origin to the late 15th Century when Jews were expelled from Spain and migrated to various regions of the world. Today, Colombia has a thriving and well-established Jewish community with about 4,500 members. One community leader argued that there is not much anti-Semitism, but they do encounter "anti-Semitic individuals." Anti-Semitic rhetoric in the media is regularly linked to the Israel-Palestine conflict and was more prevalent during the Gaza conflict of 2014. While in Bogotá, we also met with Israeli Ambassador Marco Sarmoneta, who shared concerns about recent anti-Semitic rhetoric on social media. We exchanged best practice tools for combating anti-Semitism with the Ambassador, including the adoption of a working definition for anti-Semitism. Later, our office met with the Acting Vice-Minister for the Ministry of Interior, who informed us about government initiatives to promote interreligious dialogue and to provide security for Jewish and other religious institutions. Finally, we had the honor of meeting with Monsignor Pedro Mercado of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, who shared that the Catholic Church has offered to speak out publicly against recent anti-Semitic rhetoric in the community and actively pushes back against this form of hate speech.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Our next stop was Buenos Aires, from July 16 – 19 to take part in the first Latin American Global Forum Against Anti-Semitism. The Forum brought together 250 civil society and government leaders from 17 different countries, to share best-practice tools for combating anti-Semitism. The Forum coincided with the 22nd anniversary of the Israeli Argentine Mutual Association (AMIA) bombing and incorporated commemorative events into Forum discussions. After the Forum, our office met with Jewish representatives from AMIA and the Delegation of Israeli Argentine Associations (DAIA), the official umbrella organization representing the community in government affairs. The Argentine Jewish community informed us that they are looking forward to strengthening ties with the current government, but they remain concerned about obtaining justice in the AMIA and Nisman cases. The SEAS office also met with the Secretary of Worship for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Santiago Manuel De Estrada, who emphasized that the government will support the Jewish community and the judicial branch in finding a resolution for the AMIA and Nisman cases. I noted that Argentina could also play a leadership role in efforts to adopt a working definition of anti-Semitism. While in Buenos Aires, we also met with Monsignor Carlos Malfa of the Episcopal Conference of Argentina, who reaffirmed the Church's commitment to fighting anti-Semitism and to reinforcing interfaith dialogue with all religious communities.



At the Latin American Global Forum Against Anti-Semitism (GFCA) in Buenos Aires, SEAS Forman speaks about the importance of partnering with civil society groups to fight anti-Semitism.



SEAS Forman thanks Cardinal Norberto Rivera and the Catholic Church for their work to combat anti-Semitism in Mexico City.

Mexico City, Mexico

After our visit to Buenos Aires, we made our final stop in Mexico City. Mexico has the third largest Jewish community in Latin America with close to 45,000 members. Our first meeting was with the President of the Central Committee of the Jewish Community, who noted that anti-Semitism is not a major problem in Mexico, but that anti-Israel media usually translates to anti-Semitic rhetoric in the public. When anti-Semitic rhetoric does manifest itself, the community receives a lot of support from both the government and the Catholic Church. We met with the Undersecretary of Migration, Population and Religious Affairs, Humberto Roque Villanueva, who informed us that the government works with the Jewish community to monitor and take down anti-Semitic statements from social media. We then met with Cardinal Norberto Rivera, who confirmed that the Catholic Church has close ties with the community, and has

offered to make public statements to push back against anti-Semitic rhetoric whenever it arises. I thanked Cardinal Rivera and the Church for their leadership in combating anti-Semitism and hope to use this as a model to engage other religious communities on combatting anti-Semitism. Another insightful meeting was with Guimel, a LGBTI Jewish community group based in Mexico City, working to voice the human rights of LGBTI members. The LGBTI community encounters resistance from some segments of the Jewish community; they hope that one day, they may be accepted as full members by the entire community.

Domestic Events

- **Speaker at the Association of Holocaust Organization's winter seminar at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (January 2016)**
- **Jewish Community Outreach, Allentown, PA (February 2016)**
- **Jewish Community Outreach, Los Angeles, CA (February 2016)**
- **Speaker at Center for Jewish Civilization Launch, Georgetown University, Washington DC (February 2016)**
- **Presented at ADL Regional Board Meeting, Philadelphia (May 2016)**
- **Presented at Religious Literacy course for Montgomery County Public School teachers (June 2016)**
- **Spoke at Conference of Presidents Briefing: Working Group on Jewish Communities at Risk, New York City (June 2016)**
- **Briefed U.S. House of Representatives Bipartisan Taskforce on Combating Anti-Semitism staff (August 2016)**
- **Speaker at ADL Senior Staff briefing, ADL Headquarters, New York City (August 2016)**



SEAS Forman speaks to Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley, Allentown, PA (February 2016)

Online Outreach

State.gov

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